

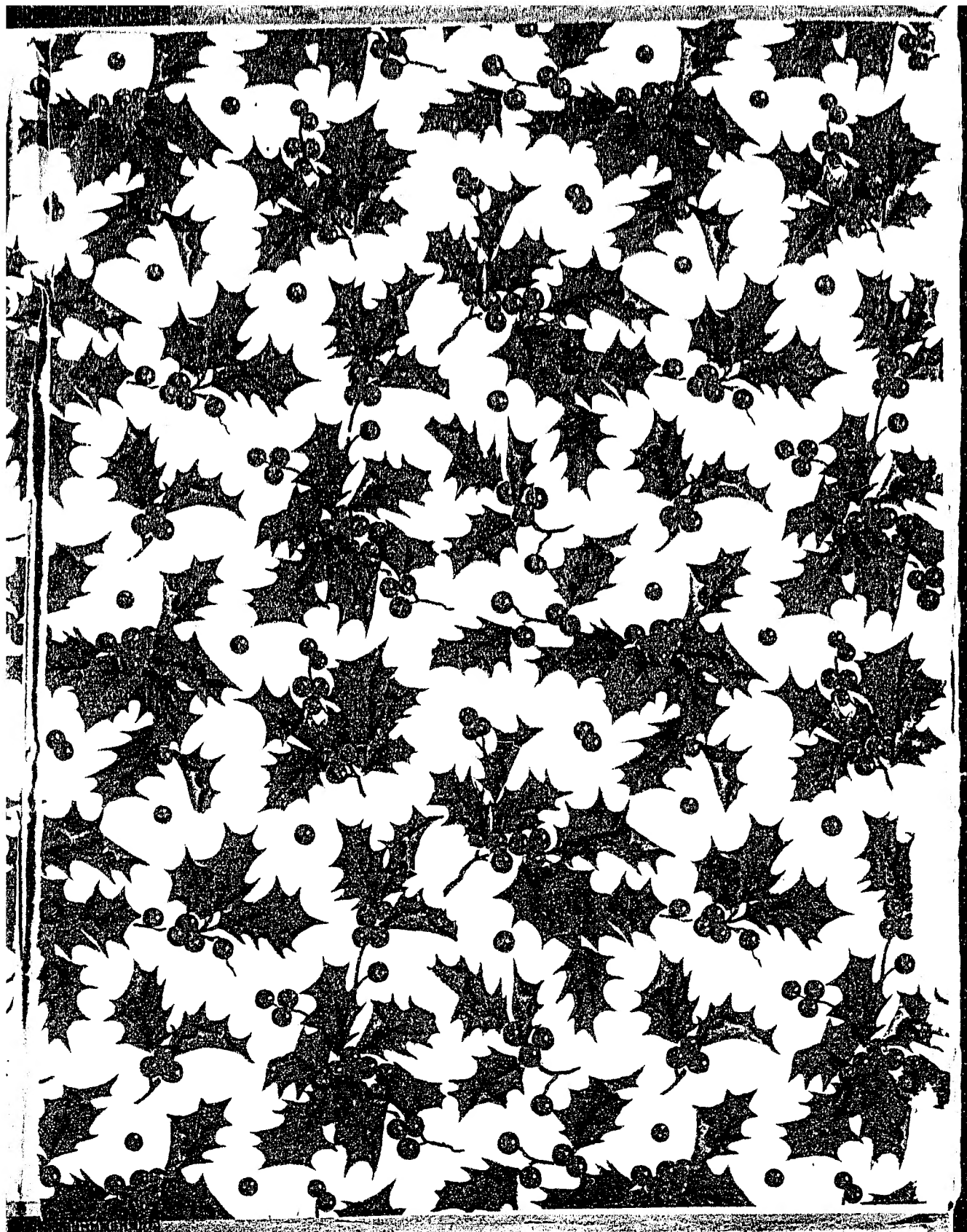
"OLD DAN"

BY
PHIL EDWARDS

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1910

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Emerson, Manitoba

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DAN'S FRIENDS



WHEN I moved my worldly goods into town, consisting of two trunks and a few other things, Daniel Wilson, Esquire, and myself became friends. In spite of some differences of opinion, we are the best of friends yet.

"Old Dan," as he is so often called, is one of the wisest and best of men, and all without once knowing it. The difference between Dan and myself is that he is quite original, whilst I am dependent upon men and things for the few ideas with which I am credited.

Dan is both naturally religious and spiritually minded. He is not a saint of the kind usually talked of, but he has in him the making of one when the job is through. Dan's knowledge is varied and his faith strong. He has faith in nearly everybody and everything. The man turned down by Dan might not be considered worth picking up by anyone else.

The day after I rented the cottage on the corner, and also the day I moved in, Dan came over to see if he or his "Sarah" could do anything. And it struck me just then that he had done a good deal by coming over to see me.

"We ain't big people, nor rich, nor none too good; but we can do a few things," he said.

Old Dan

I was taken quite by surprise, but managed to say "Thank you, Mr. Wilson."

"Tut, tut," Dan replied ; "neighbors ought to to be some use as well as some bother. I guess we shall be some bother after awhile, so we want to be of some use first. You have a stove, I see, and some other things, too. Can't I help you to sèt up the stove pipes ? And where is your wife and the children ? Say, when they come you can bring them over to our house 'til we fix things up. Now, come on, and we will soon set up the stove."

In a week or two we were housed and acquainted. From that day to this we have visited as all neighbors should who can agree.

Dan's talks and pranks are well worth the telling ; so I am going to risk public censure, and perhaps a little scorn, for the sake of making others acquainted with "Old Dan Wilson."

I am going to tell the truth about Dan. Not the whole truth, however. The whole truth about any man should never be told. To tell the whole truth about the best of men would do no good, and it might do a deal of harm. Much of what Dan has said and done is not going into print, if I can help it. By that, I do not mean to say that "Old Dan" was given to wickedness, but that he said and did things

of a private nature and with a view to helping others.

Dan, like many another well-made man, is woman made. He never will own up, but I and others know it. Sarah Matthews is the making of Daniel Wilson, and a good job she has made of him. Six feet of raw bone and muscle, some brain, a big heart and no nerves was about all she took "for better and for worse." Between them they have succeeded well. They have a good house and home, a little money and five of the finest grown-up children in the land.

Back of every grown and good man you may see, if you have eyes to see, a good woman. A real woman does not show herself when the limelight is being turned on, if she can help it. By the way, a real good man dislikes publicity for its own sake.

"A good man," so Dan tells me ; there never was but one, and they made Him quit. "Being good" doesn't pay unless one is willing to take pay in "knocks."

Once I asked him what he thought of this old world.

"Well," he said ; "it's rough at times, but I am real glad I'm here. And, what's more, I would like to stay a while longer, too."

Goodness in the abstract Dan knows nothing of.

Old Dan

Being good is doing good, he will tell you. Goodness is not feeling like going to church when the bell rings, but being harmless. Dan never talks of entering into the Kingdom of Heaven, yet I know he is there, because he is so possessed of a childlike spirit. More than any man I know, Dan is childlike without being in the least childish. According to "Old Dan," a Christian should be harmless above all things. And harmlessness is much more than going to church twice on Sunday. It is working hard, paying one's debts, telling the truth, saying one's prayers, loving one woman more than all the rest in the world and staying home at night. All this should be done to the end that no one should be harmed or injured. Dan has told me often that there is only one big sin : Injury. Injury, either to one's self or others, is sin enough to damn any one, so he tells me.

I once asked Dan if he thought that God was mostly pleased or displeased with men.

"Pleased mostly," he said.

I then asked him what made him think so.

"Because He treats us so well," he replied.

When is God displeased with men, Dan ?

"When we do harm."

When we sin, you mean.

Old Dan

“I don’t know what sin is. To do harm is all the sin I can think of. The man who harms a dog displeases God.”

I thought I had caught Dan, so I said: Then how can you think that God is mostly pleased when there is so much harm done?

“There’s lots of harm done, but lots more of good every day, so I think. Don’t you?”

To argue against either God or man with “Old Dan” Wilson would be a waste of time for less than nothing. To him God is a great “Householder,” who keeps everything in order. Neither His children nor His servants are always good, but they all belong to the House.

Old Dan's Boss



SINCE I have no intention of telling everything that Dan has told me, neither have I any idea of writing his biography, I am not bound to observe the order of events. So right here I am going to tell how cruelly he was often bossed by the person always called "Sarah."

I noticed that my neighbor was half out of sorts. Usually he was very good natured and quite willing to talk ; but for two or three days he had been as stony looking as the Sphinx.

"Dan," I said, "what has happened ? Your grandparents are all dead, your children grown up, your wife good natured, and yet you seem as though crape hung on the door bell. What's the matter ?"

"It's none of your business," he said, with a smile.

Being so well used to Dan's manner, I was in no way hurt by his want of polish in conversation. The smile, too, rather elevated me ; for I quickly saw that I had struck the vein or cause of his seriousness.

It's none of my business, I know, I said, but the people are many who, having little or no business of their own to attend to, would meddle with the business of others. And I am one of them, Dan.

Old Dan's Boss

"Bless everything 'cepting the cat and the dog," he replied, with another smile.

Why not include the canine and the feline, I asked.

"Well, it's this way. Neither the cat or the dog says anything to me and all the rest nearly plague me to death."

"Gosh ! but I'm good and mad these days, so you had better let me alone. See ! I give you full and fair warning now."

I see, Dan, but since you are so harmless I shall proceed to interrogate.

"Interrogate ! What's that ? If it's anything better to eat than what they keep in our house I want it quick. So hand it out. Is it anything better than pancakes and syrup ?"

A man would be foolish to hand you anything good to eat and expect you not to eat it ; particularly pancakes and syrup.

"How do you know that I like pancakes ? Did any of 'em tell you as how I liked pancakes and syrup ? Did Sarah tell ?"

Know ! Why, all the town knows that, and a deal more than that about you, Dan.

"What do them know about me ? Who's told them things ? Anyways I'm honest, and pay most

Old Dan's Boss

of my debts ; and I'm as clean as people who don't wash oftener than once a week ; I don't lie about my neighbors more than I can possibly help, and I tell the whole truth when its convenient ; so what do they know ? Tell me that ?”

Didn't you eat pancakes and syrup for supper on Monday evening ? And didn't you get sick ?

“Who told you ? Did Sarah or the girls ? There, bless me ! I knew they had been telling things ; 'cause Tommy Jones, says he, ‘You're sick, Old Dan. Says he, ‘You're sick as a dog. What made you eat all the pancakes for ?’ Now you throws it up to me again. Can't I eat pancakes if I want to ? Ain't I boss of myself ? Sarah ain't boss, and I tell her so. Ain't pancakes as good as anything else to fill up on ? And I've got to fill up, haven't I ? Gosh ! I never was sick on pancakes yet, and I've eat whole stacks of 'em ; I have, in my time, I tell you. What ailed me was a bad cold.”

You have a bad cold, Dan, I said.

“You bet, I have. And Sarah she wanted me to take gruel and go to bed early next night. I was a-kind of sick, I allow, and a bit in the way, seeing that your missus and the church women were a-coming in.

“Well, Sarah she wanted me to take gruel and

Old Dan's Boss

go to bed, and I wouldn't. She ain't boss of me, and never was. So I up an' tell her for once. When I see her mixing up the gruel I got as mad as could be, and I said I wouldn't take it to please her or anybody else. No, sir ! Gruel is for sick folk and for women ; and I ain't a woman and didn't have to take it.

"Presently the stuff was made and along come Sarah as nice as pie. 'Pa,' she says, 'you have a bad cold and you'll be sick to-morrow if I don't mind you ; so you sit down in the kitchen and drink that nice gruel, and then you can go off to bed.'

"No," says I, "I won't drink no gruel, and I won't go off to bed till ten o'clock ; see if I do.

"'Pa,' she says again ; and, gosh, if she didn't let on as if she wanted to kiss me, 'you take that gruel and go to bed, and you will be well in the morning. You know that me and the girls think a lot of you, and we don't want you to get sick. That's why I have fixed you up that nice gruel.'

"Well, I was good and cross and I did some tearing round. I said I was boss and I wouldn't drink slop ; not I !

"Whilst I was tearing round Sarah only stood a-laughing. She never said a word ; only stood

Old Dan's Boss

and laughed, mind you. Her laughing made me worse than ever, and I said some awful things. Whilst I was a-going on the door bell give a ring and I knowed the jig was up."

What did you do then, Dan ? I asked.

"Well, 'twere no use making a fuss afore your missus and the church women, so I went into the kitchen out of sight. Though I wasn't half as mad as I let on, my face wasn't none too good to look at, and that's why I went into the other room."

But did you take the gruel, Dan ?

"You see, I went into the kitchen and sat down. There was the dish of gruel, all hot, and the sugar bowl on the table. The white cloth was laid, and things did look nice, I must say. 'No,' says I to myself, 'I won't take that gruel, nor I won't go to bed either.'

"Presently I hear Sarah say 'Please excuse me' to the ladies, and in she comes. She pulled up my armchair to the stove and shook up the cushion, and come over to where I was a-sitting. Then, again, she tried to kiss me. And, to save a fuss when folk were in the house, I let her. After that I took the gruel, and it tasted nice, too. When I got through with the dish I went up the back stairs to bed. But what makes me mad is that I let

Old Dan's Boss

her boss me. And I ain't much better yet."

There isn't much the matter with you, Dan, I said.

"Not much, no ; but I feel like as I was hen-pecked quite a bit. Say, do you let your wife boss you like Sarah does me ?

"And, tell me, too : How did you come to know that I ate pancakes for supper Monday night ? Did Sarah tell ?"

No, Dan ; You told me so yourself. I was only fooling when I said you were sick.

"Well, how did Tommy get to know ? Can you tell me that ?"

I told Tommy, and he laughed and said he would josh you good.

"You are a bad pair ; you and Tommy Jones.

"But you didn't say whether you let your wife boss you like my wife do me."

What answer I made I do not quite remember. One thing I am sure of, and it is that any woman who can boss as beautifully and successfully as Mrs. Wilson should be allowed to do it.

Old Dan's Pedigree



ONE day when Dan and I were discussing the different nationalities I said : What are you ? Are you Irish or Scotch, or what ?

"I'm blessed if I know, but I think I am good part Irish and the rest Scotch. Bad mixture, ain't it ?" said Dan.

Very bad, Dan ; so I am told both by the Irish and the Scotch.

"What do you mean ?" asked Dan. "Do you mean to say that the Irish are bad and the Scotch worse."

"No, not that ; but I know a Scotchman who says that the Irish are too fond of whisky, and I know an Irishman who says, 'The Scotch are divils to the backbone, ivery wan of them.' So I conclude that if each is bad the mixture must be worse.

"Y're right ; if I do say it myself," said Dan.

"But the Scotch love money, if they do love whisky. They beat the Jews for that, don't they ? The Jews used to be the richest fellows in the world before Carnegie came along."

Do you think that Carnegie has more money than Baron Rothschild ?

"I don't know, I'm sure ; and less do I care. D'y know, I'm not struck on money myself, or

Old Dan's Pedigree

whisky, either. A little of both will do me. Maybe its because I'm more Irish than Scotch by a good deal."

How do you know that you are more Irish than Scotch, Dan ?

"My mother was Irish. Say! did I ever tell you about my folk? No! Well, you have missed a good bit, and I must tell you. D'y know, I'm struck on my pedigree, from Adam clean down. You should have seen my father. He was great for his size—six feet and more. My, but he had a deal more sense than I have. He had more sense than money. Now, it's the other way with our Pat; he has more money than sense. Pat made his money all easy by contracting on the railway a few years ago. Now he is going round seeing sights, riding in an auto alongside of a young woman he's married to. But I was going to tell you about my father, wasn't I?"

You did begin, Dan.

"Well, I do wander around a lot when I begin to talk. So does our minister, don't he? Have you noticed that?"

Occasionally, yes.

"My father was Scotch. Oatmeal and the Catechism didn't agree with his stomach, so he be-

Old Dan's Pedigree

came a soldier and joined a British regiment. Being a soldier, it was his business to fight. I think he fought along with the Duke of Wellington. Anyway, he was always talking about him and Lord Nelson. When father quit the job of marching and fighting he married and come to Canada. They settled in the Ottawa Valley, in Ontario. I was born there, and so was Pat, and Lizzie, too. The old fellow had got religion by this time. And he was real religious, mind you. Somehow he didn't like the Presbyterians, and he pulled off from them. I can remember when he used to preach in houses and barns. My! but he were a powerful preacher, and no mistake. He didn't whisper much. When he got going it was terrible. Shabby saints and fool sinners got their roasts from him. But the old fellow was good, if he was hard on sinners and me and Pat. I know he didn't preach one thing and practice another. Not he. He used to rise up of mornings at five o'clock, summer and winter. And sing! Why, he'd sing half a day at a stretch. And how he did like to chop in the bush. When he got a job of chopping and singing he was happy as could be. Why, you could hear him sing and chop a mile away. He wasn't dull, either. I've got his books yet. I showed them to the minister and he

Old Dan's Pedigree

said that they were the best of their kind. They were Greek and Latin, too. Somebody taught him to read Greek when he was in India, I think I have heard him say. And he was real good to mother and Lizzie. Nothing was too good for them. They used to go walking with him on Sundays. Father had a strange way of taking off his hat and looking up when he was out by himself in the bush. Wern't it queer of him to do that? The neighbors allowed that he was a real good man. If he was good, and big, and powerful, he came to his end quite sudden."

What happened, Dan?

"A tree fell on him. He wasn't killed outright, but he died next day. A good thing they found him and brought him home to mother. He couldn't speak, so he lay there smiling at the folk that came in. The Presbyterian minister came and read and prayed with him, and they sung some of the old mournful hymns all night. Mother, she was sitting by the bedside. She was all broke up. They had him fixed up with things and he kept looking into mother's face. Once he took her hand and, after looking at it, kissed the ring on her finger before them all. Most of them cried and some went out. Old Duncan was one of them. Well, there he sat

Old Dan's Pedigree.

up in bed and a-looking at mother all the time. Lizzie she were up beside him on the bed. About noon he went, and there was a time, I can tell you. All the people came for miles round, and all as knew him, and some as had only heard of him, came to his funeral."

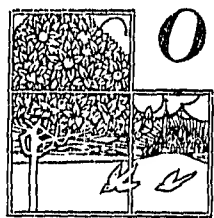
Did your mother live long after your father's death, Dan ?

"Yes, she lived nearly ten years after that ; but she was a different woman. She seemed like a body expecting another to come from a distance. Some day I will tell you more about her, and about Pat and Lizzie. I can't do it now.

Dan, I said, as I took his hand, thank you for telling me about your father. The old men were a fine type. This Canada of ours will never see the like of them again, I am afraid.

"We ain't much like them, are we ?" said Dan. "Hard times seem to make them better men and women. Things are too easy on us, and we are a-spoiling quite fast. That's what I think. Look at me ! I don't do much work, and yet if I don't get most things I get terrible out of sorts they say. Well, I'm a-doing the best I can to be good, but I ain't making much improvement. Are you ?"

Dan and the Doctor



ONE evening as I sat down to supper I heard my wife say that Mr. Wilson was sick. After taking tea and a rest I went over to see my old friend. I found him sitting in his arm chair and quite full of complaint. Before I could make any inquiry, Dan started off with :

"What do you think of this ? Tell 'em to leave me alone. They want me to go into the other room and sit in the Morris chair, as they call it ; and let them send for the doctor. I want to stay here in the kitchen. You talk to Sarah for me."

What's the matter, Dan ? I asked. Have you caught a cold ?

"No, it's rheumatism, I think. I've got it all over me. The girls think as how I'm going to give it to them. You can't give rheumatism to anybody ; 'tain't like the itch. Girls is mighty particular about some things. Just a day or two and I will be all right. I can't stay here long with them taters going to rot. Here, Biddy, I mean Elizabeth, lift my foot some higher."

"Pa, please don't call names when you want things done. My name isn't Biddy, said Miss Elizabeth. There, how is that ?"

You are not very bad, Dan, I said.

Dan and the Doctor

"Only his temper is getting spoiled, as it always does if he is kept in the house for a day," said Mrs. Wilson.

"There, Sarah, you let up. You're worse than the girls. There's not a sweeter tempered fellow round anywhere than I am, now. Is there, Phil?"

I don't live with you, Dan ; so I can't tell.

"Well, I suppose its living that tells ; and Sarah ought to know, for I've lived with her a long time, nearly forty years.

"Ma, you and Biddy go out into the sitting room 'cause I want to talk a bit. Take your sewing and go. Us men are a sort of bashful things. We don't like to talk when there's too much company round."

"Thank you, Mr. Wilson, for sending us out. My, but you are a sick man, arn't you?"

"There's girls for you," said Dan, as Mrs. Wilson and Elizabeth left the kitchen together.

When we were alone Dan asked if I was comfortable. I said yes, and so he began.

"Say, Phil, do you think I ought to send for the doc. ? I'm quite stiff and my knee is swelling some. Doc. Hartly is a terror on rheumatism. He's dead sure, if a fellow can stand the cure. He gives some kind of medicine that goes to the head like shot. Old Billy Scott called the doc. when he had the

Dan and the Doctor

rheumatism last winter, and he tells me that he went near crazy after taking the stuff Hartly give him. He said that he saw all the ghosts and goblins there were to see. He only took two doses and got cured. D'y see, he had to get cured else the doc. and Billy's wife would make him take what was left in the bottle. Now, I want to get out. I want to get cured and to stay so, but I don't want to see things unusual. I don't want to see ghosts, and as for devils, I'd a deal rather see them in the flesh than out of it. Wouldn't you ?"

I said I thought I would, if it were a matter of choice.

"Well," continued Dan, "There's Old Granny McNabb. She had rheumatics bad, too. The doc. he gave her the same sort of liquor and it had quite an effect on her, so she told me when I went to see her two weeks ago. She didn't say that it was the doctor's medicine that made her see and hear things. She only told me that she took the first full dose and fell off fast asleep, and that she heard beautiful singing and harps a-playing. After a while she see a lot of shining angels around her bed. They picked her up and took her away to some place where there were lots more in white robes and singing and walking about under trees on a river bank. Of course I

Dan and the Doctor

knew that it was the doc's strong stuff what had got to her head. But wasn't it strange that the same med'cine would act so different on Granny to what it did on Billy? I 'count for it this way. Old Billy, he's bad and half afraid of seeing the devil and when he took the dose he just see what he expected. Now, Old Granny, she's a saint and always reading her Bible and singing nice hymns, so when she took a spoonful she see just what she wanted to see and hear. If I thought that Hartly would cure me and that I wouldn't see anything but angels playing on harps, I'd send for him purty quick. There, now, I've told you all I wanted to; now you tell me what to do. Must I send for Doc. Hartly?"

The sick must call a physician, Dan.

"I know they must if they can't get well without them. Doctors don't cure—they only patch up, and it's mighty poor patching mostly; and you've got to pay smartly for it, too."

But, Dan, people who never think of sending for a doctor until they are half dead can't expect to get well all at once. How often have you called a doctor in all your long life?

"Only twice, that I can mind of."

Suppose you send for Dr. Simpson if you are afraid of Dr. Hartly's treatment?

Dan and the Doctor

"Gosh ! Simpson is struck on the water cure. He gives lots of Epsom, Lithia and Sal-Hepatica in whole glasses of cold water ten times a day and twice in the night if you wake up. Do you think there's any good in swilling a body like that ? Now tell me !"

I would much rather take the water cure than a drug treatment, Dan, if I were you.

"But you ain't me, I'm sorry to say ; or you would be sick and I would be well, don't you see."

You are not very sick, Dan ; you are only a little stiff in the joints.

"Well, if you only had my legs and I had yours you'd want to change back again purty soon.

"But, say, I think I will send for Doc. Simpson. The water cure ain't killing, is it ? Why, it can't kill a fellow. D'y know, water is as good as whisky if you only think so. I ought to be on the side of the pump, seeing as how I've used it a good deal all my life. And, to tell the honest truth, I'm never so well as when I down lots of water. So you tell Simpson to come and see me when he's got a mind to. If I get thin and pale as a ghost after taking the doc's water cure I'll blame it on to you ; and, what's worse, I'll tell Sarah on you both, and then you'll catch it and no mistake. So you tell Simpson when

Dan and the Doctor

you go by in the morning.

"You're going, are you! Well, 'twas good of you to call and see an old chap. If you are a-going through the house tell Sarah to come here to me.

"Good night, Phil."

Good night, Dan. I'll tell the doctor first thing in the morning.



ARE you going to vote for Bradley or the other fellow ?" asked Dan.

I haven't quite made up my mind, I said.

You haven't, eh ! You're a kind of on the fence, I suppose. Well, I don't like fellows that can't make up their minds. They always seem to me to be like a goat going to pasture in the field where there's best fodder and something to buck against for mischief."

Thank you, Dan, for the insinuation ; and, seeing that there is some truth in it, I take it as a compliment.

"I'm good on compliments when they come to hand without much trouble fetching up. But don't you think we ought to go to Bradley's meeting ? Brad. he's as good as the best, and maybe better, so we ought to get him elected, if only to show that we can. The other fellow mayn't be no better nor no worse, but he's not on our side, so we've got to get him left, for sure."

You are a straight party man, Daniel Wilson, and will vote for 'your side,' right or wrong ; so I don't think much of you as a politician.

"I can't help it, Phil ; and I've got to vote for Bradley, if I do lose your respect."

Dan's Politics

You are a much better man than a politician, Dan.

"All right ; that'll do, seeing as I am a man three hundred and sixty-five days in a year and a politician only thirty days every four years. See ! Now, what's the use to talk, when the Grits are no worse than Tories and the Tories are no better than the Grits. One thing's sure, neither of them can ruin this country, or they would have done it long ago."

Why can't they ruin this country, Dan ?

"'Cause we won't let 'em, that's why. D'y think we are going to be ruined quite yet ? No, sir ; there's too much to ruin. And if they don't know where to stop, we do, you bet."

Who's ' they ' ?

"Laurier, Fielding, Roblin and Rogers ! Them's the fellows that run the whole machine, as far as I can see. They're first rate chaps any way you take 'em, but they show up a lot better in office than out of it. I can't vote for all, seeing as I am a party politician, as you say ; but if the parties should change places to-morrow 'twouldn't make me very desperate."

'Tis you that are on the fence, then. You are the goat willing to take the best pasture and a

and a chance to buck for mischief.

"That's me ; and there's lots like me, isn't there ?"

There may be, Dan ; but don't you think that the great parties have principles and are guided by them ?

"Yes, they stand for principles, both of them ; but they can't always get them going, so they fall back on politics to please the people and to keep things moving. If they didn't we'd be stuck. As it is, we come nearly getting stuck sometimes now."

And so you think it would be a difficult thing to ruin this country, Dan ?

"I do ; and I've told you why. As I say, we are a rich people ; we have lots of things to give away amongst ourselves, and lots of stuff to sell to other parties outside. Even the way things are going—and they are going purty fast, I allow—we can't be ruined for a long time to come. Miss Canada isn't a-going to marry any hard up fellow from over the sea. She'll see that she's neither given or sold for gold or fame. That fellow Laurier is too much in love with her himself to give her to anybody. See if he do."

So you are going to vote for Bradley, Dan, are you ?

Dan's Politics

"I've got to ; seeing as how Sarah and Mrs. Bradley fixed things up."

What do you mean, Dan ?

"Well, Mrs. Bradley called to see Sarah and said she always liked us more than most people in town ; and she says that Bradley is a real good man, and she knows it ; and she says that he is as good as can be to his friends, too. Tell the truth, I rather likes the Bradleys myself. That being so, and seeing that Brad. can't do any harm, I think I ought to vote for him."

So you are going to vote your party, I see.

"Oh ! you needn't look shocked. Anyway, there's no money going round, I can tell you that."

Nor whisky, either, eh ?

"Not for them as don't want it ; no. And them as do will have to ask for it more than once before they get it."

Then it can be got for asking twice, can it ?

"What ?" asked Dan.

Money or whisky, I said.

"Now, you think you've caught on. But no you haven't. I can tell you that I've voted many times and I never got anything yet. I hear a lot about graft and liquor, but I never see either with my eyes or touched it with my fingers. Nor I

ain't a-going to, if it would save my life, either. If I didn't vote for Bradley I'd vote for Bradley's wife. And I am not the only one that would do the same thing, am I?"

Perhaps not, Dan ; and that shows that women are a power in politics.

"Well, didn't you know that? And they are going to get votes ; see if they don't."

Votes ! Where, Dan ?

"In Canada. See if they don't ? We have a lot of good women in this country, haven't we ? Haven't they done a lot to build things up ? And are we afraid they will get the upper hand ? I ain't afraid of that, are you ?"

I am half afraid, Dan.

"I don't believe you, for once. There now."

So you are going to vote the Grit ticket, Dan ?

"I'm likely to vote for Bradley ; yes."

Or for Bradley's wife. Which ?

"Which you like ; but it's more likely as I am voting for Sarah."

I thought you had a will of your own, I said.

"So I have ; but I keep that for special doings. You wait 'till I see any danger to Canada and then I'll vote against all parties if I want to. Don't I tell you there's nothing or nobody to vote for in par-

Dan's Politics

ticalar. When there is I am not going to ask Sarah or the girls how to vote. Watch me then, before you give me up. I haven't always voted party straight, nor ain't a-going to, but parties ain't wrong because they are parties. I do believe in God and the people. God will take care of the people, and the people will watch the parties. We've cut the heads off kings before now, haven't we? And we've cut the heads off governments, too, haven't we? If we use the ballot far oftener than the axe its the same thing."

A stuffed ballot box is a dull axe, Dan.

"Stuffed! Yes, sometimes the box gets stuffed, or lost, or something, but that's all fooling. Some time there'll be a live question put up—something as will call for men, not politicians. When that time comes there will be no stuffing ballot boxes, or losing them, either. Such times a man would think as little of selling his vote or stuffing a ballot box as selling his soul to the devil. All as do, let 'em go to their own place. Forgive my Irish for getting up."

You're quite forgiven, Dan. Call again, I said.



SAY," said Dan ; "I wish someone would write a book telling how to be good. Don't you ?"

Are you trying ? I asked.

"Real hard," he replied.

Why, Dan, there are many books to be had that tell how to be good. Have you never read them ?

"I've read lots that say we all ought to be good, and that if we ain't we'll catch it ; but I never read one that could teach how. D'y suppose that book writers don't know how themselves ?"

That might be the reason, Dan ; yet there is one Book that tells how to be good, you know.

"You mean the Bible."

I do.

"Well, I guess I'll have to read it some more, and quite a bit more carefully.

"But, say, I'm mad again."

You are only letting on. What made you mad this time ?

"Ever since I got better of the rheumatism I've been mad at times, off and on. Seems that I've got to be pinched to be kept sweet. Didn't Daddy Dibbs say as how all must suffer if they want to get saved."

Dan on Civilization

He did say something to that effect, Dan.

"Do you believe rheumatism ever saved anybody?"

Yes; from going out.

"Staying in is the devil, I'm sure of that. Nobody was ever saved by being kept in-doors. Shut a fellow in for long and he'll go clean to the bad in no time."

But you didn't tell me what made you mad, Dan?

"Don't think I ought to. If I did you'd think me mean as dirt."

Has Bradley been bothering you again?

"Not he. I told him to go to the 'rats,' and he's gone, I do think."

You must have forgotten yourself when you used such language, surely.

"That's what Sarah said; but I only told her that I was a little smarter than usual, and not mad. It's this way: When I'm real mad I ain't a bit smart, and when I'm smart I ain't a bit mad. That's true!

"But, say, isn't this being civilized an expensive piece of business? Every time I go over to town its 'Pa, do bring some toilet soap,' or a tooth brush, or tooth paste, or face wash, or books, or stamps; and yesterday I had to pay seven dollars for a new

Dan on Civilization

lawn mower. What d'y think of that ?”

Very good, I said.

“Very good for every part of the clothes 'cept the pocket, I'll allow, and when I'm sick there I'm sick all over. When I tell Sarah and the girls they say 'We're civilized.' Well, I say, when I were young I didn't have no tooth brush, nor tooth paste, nor toilet soap, nor we didn't have such a thing as a lawn mower 'bout the place ; and, says I, weren't we civilized ?”

What answer did you get, Dan ?

“Nothing at all ! They only laughed at me. That's all.

“Now, I'm quite willing to be civilized some, but I can't pay all the costs. As I see things, to be real civilized is to be kept poor as a burr sticking on to something for support. Look at the Lepsons ; they are the most civilized and cultivated people in town, and they say as how they are awfully poor and loaded down with debt. A body can get too much of most any good thing. Too much civilization is as bad as too much of anything else. I don't know for sure, and so I wouldn't like to shout it ; but I do think that's why so many folk don't get married—they're too civilized. If I had the fixing of things I'd fix it so as they couldn't get too much

Dan on Civilization

civilization more than too much liquor. The one is as near bad as the other. Decent people take a bath once a week ; but there's Brown, he takes a bath every day. Now, he's too much refined. It may be all right, but I never found that same Brown the best of pay. Sell him a basket of vegetables or load of hay, you've got to wait and ask for the money till you're tired most."

Dan, I said ; you are wrong. You should not hold civilization accountable for poverty, or even for shabbiness. Then, you must remember that we are not quite civilized, or all civilized, yet.

"Sakes !" said Dan ; "if we're only half civilized what will it cost to finish the job ? And, what's more, what will we be like and what will we be worth when the job is done ? Say what you like, Phil, but I've noticed that those who claim to be the most civilized do the least work. I don't want to talk about folk behind their backs, but you just take a look around you and you'll see purty soon who works and who don't. Denning, the storekeeper, tells me that they who owes him the most are the hardest to please. Old Jukes owes Denning close on to a thousand dollar store bill and young Jukes and his sisters get the best clothes and gloves that can be got. They are all grand to look at and all

Dan on Civilization

talk fine, but they've no feeling for Old Jukes, or for Denning either. I say that if I had to fix things I'd pass a law that nobody could get civilized without paying spot cash for it. I say this because I think extravagance and civilization are one and the same thing. Finery isn't necessary to existence, and to happiness, is it?"

I don't think it is, Dan.

"I know that some could smash my argument, but they couldn't prove I'm wrong. When most of the young folk get the old fellows into debt up to their eyes to appear civilized and up-to-date it's too bad. I'm good for any reasonable amount of tooth brushes and tooth paste, and toilet soap, too, and a lawn mower every ten years, but I'd soon put a stop to chewing gum, cigarettes, scent and jewelry 'till people could pay for everything else they got. What's things coming to if we are a-going to be civilized that way?"

Dan! why, you are a kicker.

"No I ain't ; I am as good a carriage horse as can be got, but I got horse sense. And even a horse has a right to ask to be unhitched when the load gets too heavy or too hard to draw. That's what I am. I ain't no kicker. If I wants to ease my feelings I can talk to you, and you'll listen to me, but

Dan on Civilization

over to my house they only listen a while and then laugh ; and Sarah, she comes and stands by my chair and looks down into my face, and if I didn't watch her she'd kiss me. So its a poor show I get over there, isn't it ?"

Very poor, Dan, I said ; and what are you going to do about it ? Are you going to stay on ?

"I guess I'll have to. Then where'll I go and get any better, d'y think ?"

I am sure I don't know ; but if you ever make up your mind to leave let me know, and I will have an extra room built to my house for you.

Dan saw I was fooling more than sympathizing, so he said as he went :

"I'm going to stay ; but I ain't going to be civilized too much. Not I."



DAN'S PETS WAITING FOR DINNER



GOSH! but I'm riled, and no mistake."

What's the matter, Dan? As I asked the question my heart gave a thump, for I saw that there was something wrong at last. What ever could have happened that could awake the slumbering man in old Dan Wilson? That he was aroused I could plainly see by the flash of his eyes and unusual tone of voice.

"That Ike Madden is worse than the old devil himself. He come home drunk an hour ago, and 'cause there was no supper got, and to plague his missus, he picked up one of the kids and roasted him over the stove lids. There's the child over to my house crying badly. Do you come over and see for yourself."

I followed Dan and saw what I never want to see in the world again. The drunken brute of a father had actually grilled his little boy of four years of age over the red-hot stove.

Mrs. Madden, in her fright and horror, picked up the child and ran to Mrs. Wilson for protection. Dan, being at home, saw the situation, and without loss of time horsewhipped the inhuman father until he begged for mercy.

Dan, I said; I am going to see the Mayor. That

Dan Ailed

fiend should be whipped and sent down for a year for doing what he has done to-night. I am going to see the magistrate right away.

At this Mrs. Madden began to cry and beg of Mrs. Wilson to prevent my going out.

"Don't send him to prison," she cried. He was drunk and did not know what he was doing."

Mrs. Madden, it's all very well for you to excuse your husband, I said, but there are others who are bound to look into a case of this kind. Why a woman and a mother should forget her duty toward her children as to allow them to be in danger of their lives is more than I can tell. I will see to it that your husband is placed behind prison bars for this, and that without delay.

As I left the house Dan followed me.

"Phil," he said, "please don't go to the constable ; 'twill make things worse for the woman. He won't do it again—he's afraid of me. If you want Ike whipped with the horsewhip I can do it again."

Again, Dan ?

"Yes ; I gave him a good licking a little while ago. Didn't you hear someone holler ? You bet, I gave him all he wanted, and a good deal more."

What did you use on the fellow, Dan ?

Dan Ailed

"I used that snake whip I found on the road a year ago, and it cut like a knife. When I got through I was purty warm. I talked to him some, too ; and I telled him that if he didn't behave I'd give him some more of the same medicine."

Dan, I am quite proud of you. You did the right thing, and I have no doubt you did it well ; but it is not for us to take the law into our own hands. Then, he will play the same trick if he is not put away.

"You bet, he won't. He'll either quit or get out. See if he don't. Gosh ! he's not the only mean neighbor I've punched or whipped in thirty years. And I tell you they all quit, and Ike is going to do the same."

I didn't know that you were that kind, Dan, I said.

"Nobody knows, only the fellows and their women folk," said he. "Say, you know Dun ; Mr. Dun ?"

Yes ; what about him ?

"Well, his little girl and my 'Lizbeth were playing and got to quarreling, like children do, and he came out and slapped her on the face. She were only a little thing and he gave her a bad slap. When I see the child's cheek I went over.

Dan Kiled

“ ‘Mr. Dun,’ I says, ‘why did you slap ‘Lizbeth?’

“Says he : ‘Get off my place at once ! Now, get off.’

“ ‘Tell me,’ says I, ‘what did you ——’ and he cut me off short and began to push. ‘Get off my premises,’ said he ; ‘I don’t want to be bothered with people of your kind.’

“Well, as I said, he began to shove me off. What did happen I don’t exactly know, but I fetched him one and he fell down. I fanned him a little and sprinkled a little soft water out of the barrel on his face, and he come to. I picked him up and said I was sorry, and he went into the house. As luck happened, his wife was away from home, so it didn’t get out. I told Sarah, and she cried a bit and said she were real ashamed of me. ‘That’s all right, Sarah,’ I said ; ‘you may be ashamed of me, but if I hadn’t a-done it I would have been ashamed of myself.’ ”

I made it my business to see Madden next day. When I had done talking, and also inspecting, I concluded that Dan had done the job of whipping quite thoroughly.

What most surprised me was the fact that Ike really improved in conduct and manners generally.

“Didn’t I tell you he’d quit or get out,” said Dan.



PAINFUL, indeed, was the shock received when we heard that the Morgan boys were smitten with diphtheria. Dan was quite disturbed, I could plainly see.

"I'm afraid for them boys," he said. "They ain't going to pull through a spell of sickness such as they are likely to get. And no outsider can do anything, anyway. The doctor has warned everybody to keep away, and I guess we'll have to. Diphtheria took my Freddy, so it makes me a lot more feeling for the Morgans."

I felt for the parents of the boys, and also for Dan, because the boys were his companions much of the time, and because he had lost, so I had heard, a little fellow named Fred some years before. For several days Dan paced between his own house and Mr. Morgan's. From his manner and the look on his face I came to know that the condition of the boys had grown serious, but I was not prepared for the startling intelligence that Dr. Hartly had given them up. Dan came over about noon.

"Say, Phil," he said; "Freddy is going to go. Ain't it too bad. And Willie ain't too sure of getting better, either."

A little later I met both Dr. Hartly and Dr.

Dan and the Boys

Simpson going to Morgan's together.

"It's the worst case of the kind I ever saw," said Dr. Hartly. "Dr. Simpson and I are going there now. I hope we can pull them through."

All that day and the next we shivered with sorrow and fright. I made it my business to 'phone Dr. Simpson that afternoon.

"It's grim," he said. "We have tried the latest and best things we know of, but I am doubtful as to results,"

About midnight our house 'phone rang and I answered the call.

Hello, Dr., any good news?

"Bad news, I am sorry to say. I am afraid we are beaten. The worst might happen in a few hours. As far as I can see we shall lose the two boys—one close on the other. The blow will kill Mrs. Morgan, and if Tom stands it it will take all joy out of his life."

Dan will feel it badly, too, I said.

"He will ; but he will get over the loss. I have seen Dan in trouble before. Since then he has been kinder than ever, and when this is over Dan will stand up. To tell the truth, I am afraid we shall all add to the number of our gray hairs before many days have passed. Good night !"

Dan and the Boys

Good night, Dr.

I had scarcely hung up the 'phone when I heard a knock. I knew that Dan was there. When we were all well he always rang the door bell, but when there was sickness or trouble of any kind Dan knocked a low half sympathetic three-rap—one long and two short.

Come in, Dan, I said.

"We're going to lose them, so they say. Doc. Hartly is awful cut. I never see a man more cut up."

Is there no hope, Dan ?

"I'm afraid there isn't. What can we do ?

When doctors as skilful and as faithful as ours fail, there is little left for us, Dan, I said.

"I know ; but can't we do something ? When our Freddy went we said a prayer or two. Some say it's no use. Anyway, they don't know. Didn't He say 'Suffer little children to come unto me.' "

He did, Dan, I said.

There we stood in the hallway, Dan with his cap in his hand and I half clad ; sorrowful, but helpless. Yet not helpless as long as love and faith are one in moments of sorrow and trial.

As I stood looking into my old friend's face my heart came near to breaking. The shaded light of the lamp softened the rugged lines of Dan's face.

Dan and the Boys

My thoughts were far away, in other lands, where I first saw Death take possession of a child. For the moment I forgot Dan's being present. Whether it was the far-away look upon my face or the triumph of faith in Dan's soul, I do not know, that made him take my hand. The gentle pressure given called me back to the situation. Sweetly and with distinctness Dan said, "Pray for them!" When the prayer was said he went softly out, saying as he closed the door "Good night!"

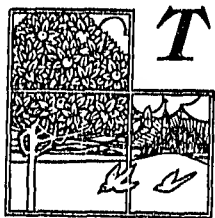
Being in no mood for reading and less likely to sleep, I began pacing the floor. The night was one of those wild, beautiful March nights. The moon shone upon the half-melted snow, relieved only by patches of black earth or snow banks soiled by dust and rain. Scarcely knowing what I did, I went outside and looked across to the residence of Tom Morgan. In the clear moonlight I saw Dan cross the roadway and go towards the house. I knew it was Dan. Great was my surprise when I saw him go close up to the door and knock. Someone opened the door and stood talking to Dan. I thought it was a risky thing to do, and I knew that the doctors would be displeased. Surprised as I was, I certainly was not prepared for what I saw next; for I saw Dan go into the house and close the door after him.

Dan and the Boys

The following day, early in the afternoon, the boys died within an hour of each other. That very evening, just as the moon arose, two small coffins were carried out and placed in a spring wagon. The minister and a few of the neighbors stood together and as near as they dared. The walk to the graveside was a sorrowful one. Once there, we lowered the mortal remains of our boy friends into the graves so hastily dug. It was a bitter night, and our hearts were very sore for our own loss and for the parents so sadly and suddenly bereaved. Our only consolation came from the utterance of the words: "Suffer little children to come unto Me." "I am the resurrection and the life."

It was a full week after the funeral that I saw Dan for the first time. Even then he did not come to see me. Seeing that I extended my hand, he took it and with great effort said: "I was with them when they both died. The doctor give his consent."

Dan and his Friends



THE pranks of Dan and some half dozen youngsters were long a source of amusement to me. I did not belong to the "gang," but I was near enough to see and hear a few things. What I knew made me anxious to know a lot more.

One morning, just as the fishing season began, I saw two or three tow-headed, barelegged and barefooted boys hanging about Dan's yard. Dan was moving around at a rather unusual speed, and at the same time giving certain instructions on the side. Feeling a little skittish myself, I went over to see what was the matter.

What is wrong with you fellows? I asked.

"Well, we are going fishing after awhile; and you can come along if your wife will only let you," said Dan.

That kind of talk was not what I had expected, and I told them so. I told the boys that they should all be at school or raking up the backyard instead of loafing around. My remarks only excited laughter and derision. They said I was "away off," and that it was a holiday but that I didn't know it. As for the job in the backyard, why "that could wait."

I did not, there and then, accept the invitation to join the party, but I made up my mind to follow

Dan and his Friends

as soon as I could get away unnoticed.

Things went wrong that morning, so it was quite late when I arrived at the fishing place. I counted five boys and four dogs on the bank of the river, but where was Dan? Back from the river-side was a bluff, and there I found him frying fish on an old metal shingle used as a frying pan. At a glance I saw why the boys all liked to go fishing with Dan. On an old, but clean, newspaper, spread out as a cloth might be, was a heap of bread, some salt and a quantity of soda biscuits. Dan was busy as a bee, but he managed to say: "If you want something good to eat, Phil, just sit down and set to." I intended giving the whole gang, big and little, a tongue-talk and started in style. I did not finish, however, because I failed to resist the temptation to eat something that looked so nice, and tasted even better.

Never was I more pleased with Dan than that day. How well and kindly he managed the lads was a sight to see. Fishing was good, and the cooking equally so. Before we left for home Dan made up the total—not of the "catch," but of the "stuff," as they called it. Then it was found that Patsy had eaten three catfish and two suckers; Mack had four catfish to his credit, and the three

Dan and his Friends

smaller boys had eaten a sucker and a catfish each. Dan declared that he was filled "to the neck" and thought that Phil "could feel fish with his finger if he only dared to put his finger in his mouth." I, of course, tried to turn the joke on the rest, but it was no use ; the gang were loyal to Dan and to each other.

"Going home" was an experience new to me. Talk about "fish stories"! Buster nearly caught a "whopper." Patsy had the biggest catch next to Dan, and so claimed the right to walk alongside the chief. Of the three smaller boys Buster was the boss, and his exploits were large and many. Diggy, the smallest of the gang, made a very bad start, for he fell in and had to be fished out by Dan. Getting wet was not the thing that grieved Diggy, but having to keep back and fish at a great disadvantage all day, with Dan's eye on him much of the time. "Old Dan" was "Mr. Wilson" to every boy who knew him. Western boys, as a rule, are healthy enough to take a slight advantage when offered, yet I do not remember a single case or occasion when a boy was rude to Mr. Wilson.

Perhaps, just here would be the place to tell of the best time Dan and I ever had together. I had fished for an hour or so after my first feast and had

Dan and his Friends

grown tired. Fishing never was any great sport to me. Dan could catch more fish in an hour or so than I could catch in a week, including the Sunday. Not caring to fish all day, I proposed to Dan that we go back to the "bluff." I told him that I much preferred to live in the kitchen than outside. Dan gave me such encouragement that in no time we were eating broiled fish and biscuit and drinking hot tea brewed in a nice new tomato can. Never did I know before how good tea could taste.

I had frequently noticed a strange thing about Wilson. It was this : Once he got a mile or so away from home he always talked about "Sarah." Some men are like that. Out of sight out of mind with many people. The fact of the matter was that Mrs. Wilson was never out of sight or mind to her husband. Some remark of mine started him going, and this is his story :

"Did I ever tell you how I got Sarah ? No ! Well, I ought to tell you, seeing as we are such good friends for so long.

"When I were a young chap I worked for Sarah's father. There were another fellow working on the place, too. He was a school teacher and worked out sometimes on farms where we lived. Fraser were a purty nice sort of a fellow and con-

Dan and his Friends

siderable better looking than I was ; and 'cause he was a school teacher he thought to get Sarah for sure. It nearly killed him to lose her. Well, it's the way some times ; a woman has to nigh kill one man to make much of a man of another. I'm sorry yet for Fraser, but 'tis no use. He thought he had to get her, whether another fellow wanted her or not. For a whole year things went on and no one could tell which was first. I couldn't, anyway. When he'd walk home from meeting with her I used to feel awful bad. And when he'd take her to a dance or a party at a neighbors, gosh ! but I couldn't work next day to save my life. She used to pity me ; I know she did, and that was the only thing that kept me up and kept me going. I was a fool, and told myself so time and time again, but it were no use. One day after they had been out together I were feeling awful. If Fraser had said anything I would have spoiled his looks for him. I know'd 'twere the devil, but I couldn't help it. Well, Phil, that afternoon I went into the house to get something, and there were Sarah sitting sewing. Says she, 'What's the matter, Dan ; are you feeling sickly ?' Says I, 'Sarah, I am purty sick, and if you and Fraser get going out together much more I'll be dead for sure.' 'Dan,' says she, 'if you don't like

Dan and his Friends

me going out with Mr. Fraser I won't go. I won't go again,' says she, as she give me her hand to bind the bargain. Well, Phil, I was a-kind of fresh and I took a little liberty which I shouldn't."

What did you do, Dan ? I asked.

"Well, I kissed her ; and I think I kissed her twice. Anyway, she blushed and walked out. There I stood as stiff as a post, and half frightened to death to think that she had gone to tell somebody. Gosh ! but I were in a fix. How I wished I were a long way off, chopping or something else. Then Sarah come in and I could see tears in her eyes ; but I couldn't tell if she were laughing or crying, which.

"‘Dan,’ says she, ‘forgive me for going to Currie’s with Fraser, and I won’t go again.’ And she never did.

"There, Phil ; that’s how I got Sarah."

Dan's Good-by



SAY, Phil, what's this I hear ; are you going off ?”

Friends, like all others, must part, Dan. I am not going very far, and I will come back again if I get half a chance.

“Well, if they don't give you half a chance you will have to make one. But what are you going away for ? More money and less work won't do you any good ; so you had better take my advice and stay. I always thought you were going to stay for keeps. I tell Sarah I don't know what I'll do. If I were not married to her I'd go with you, if you'd only let me. Would you ?”

Daniel Wilson, as long as I have a roof over my head and a dollar cash or credit you shall have a share.

“The same here, Phil ; so remember that. But I want you to promise me to come back. If you will I'll let you go.”

I make that promise, I said.

